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Girls' School **HECK** Part 3 of 3

# EXCALIBUR™



**FREE-FOR-ALL!**



STAN LEE PRESENTS CHRIS CLAREMONT'S  
FOND--ALBERT FRANTIC--FAREWELL TO EXCALIBUR

# SCHOOL SPIRIT

(or Cheerleaders from **HECK**)

THE FINAL INSTALLMENT (YAY) OF GIRLS' SCHOOL FROM ~~THE~~ **HECK!**

GREVILLE-BY-EALING  
STATION, IN THE WEST  
OF ENGLAND, SERVING  
ST. BEARLE'S SCHOOL  
FOR YOUNG LADIES...

COME ON, BRITRAIL,  
GET A WIGGLE ON, YOU  
PLANNING TO MAKE US  
WAIT ALL DAY?!

WHERE IS  
THAT BLASTED  
TRAIN?!

BE PATIENT,  
MR. REEVE. IT  
WILL COME  
WHEN IT  
COMES.

PROBABLY  
WHEN WE'RE  
DEAD OF SHEER  
BOREDOM...OR  
OLD AGE.

A TEACHER'S  
DUTY, SIR, IS TO  
SET AN EXAMPLE  
TO HIS PUPILS.  
NOT THE OTHER  
WAY 'ROUND.

YES,  
HEADMISTRESS.

DO YOU REALLY  
BELIEVE THIS TRIP  
TO LONDON HAS ANY  
HOPE OF  
SUCCESS?

PARDON  
THE CLICHÉ,  
BUT THERE  
IS ALWAYS  
HOPE.

AND ONE  
NEVER KNOWS,  
TILL ONE  
TRIES.

BY CHRIS CLAREMONT  
& RON WAGNER

ABLY AIDED AND ABETTED BY

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HE-WHO-MUST-BE-OBEYED

CHRIS CLAREMONT & ALAN DAVIS CREATORS

EXCALIBUR™ Vol. 1, No. 34, February, 1991, (ISSN # 1045-1366) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Terry Stewart, President, Stan Lee, Publisher Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing, OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1990 by Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Price \$1.75 per copy in the U.S. and \$2.25 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. \$21.00; Canada \$26.00; and foreign \$33.00. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. EXCALIBUR (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) are trademarks of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP INC. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO EXCALIBUR, c/o MARVEL COMICS, 9TH FLOOR, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



# BRITAIN'S 1<sup>ST</sup> PROFESSIONAL "AMERICAN" FOOTBALL TEAM THE BRITISH YEOMAN



COURTNEY ROSS WAS ONCE A STUDENT AT ST. SEARLES.

IF HER BANK CAN PROVIDE THE MONEY REQUIRED TO PAY THE SCHOOL DEBTS...

CHEERLEADING COMPETITION AT HALFTIME

PRETTY BIG "IF" MISS RUTHERFORD, CONSIDERING THE HARD TIMES.

AND EVEN IF YOU SUCCEED...



... WON'T WE BE EXCHANGING ONE MOUNTAIN OF DEBT FOR ANOTHER?

MERELY POSTPONING THE INEVITABLE?

IN THE END, WE'LL STILL HAVE TO PAY...

...OR CLOSE.



WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO NOTHING, SIR?!

AND SEE OUR STUDENTS SCATTERED TO THE FOUR WINDS?!

TO HOMES WHERE THEY'RE NOT WANTED, AND PARENTS WHO COULDN'T CARE LESS?!

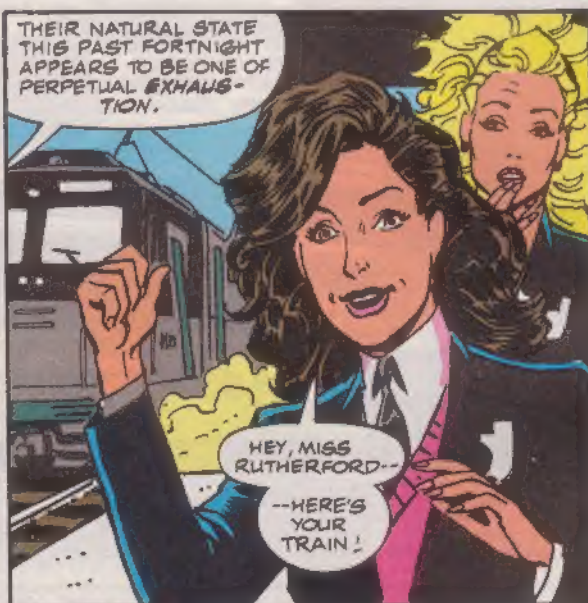
ST. SEARLES IS THE ONLY STABILITY MANY OF THESE CHILDREN HAVE, THEIR ONLY CHANCE TO MAKE SOMETHING FINE AND DECENT OF THEIR LIVES! AND I SHALL NOT SURRENDER IT, OR THEM, WITHOUT A FIGHT!



FORGIVE ME, MR. REEVE.

MY OUTRAGE AT THIS SITUATION PROMPTS ME TO FORGET MYSELF AND TO ACT AS I SHOULD NOT.

BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU BEEN EXERCISING THE SENIOR GIRLS TO EXCESS IN THEIR ATHLETICS?



THEIR NATURAL STATE THIS PAST FORTNIGHT APPEARS TO BE ONE OF PERPETUAL EXHAUSTION.

HEY, MISS RUTHERFORD--

--HERE'S YOUR TRAIN!





I SHALL TELEPHONE THE SCHOOL DIRECTLY WHEN I HAVE ANY NEWS.

HAVE A NICE TRIP, MISS R.!

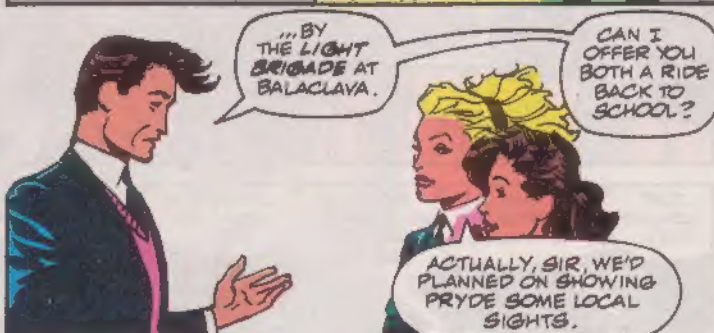
BEST OF LUCK, HEAD-MISTRESS.



POOR OLD DEAR, TALK ABOUT YOUR EXERCISES IN FUTILITY.

A BETTER CHANCE WAS HAD, PRYDE...

YOU DON'T THINK SHE CAN PULL THIS OFF?



...BY THE LIGHT BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA.

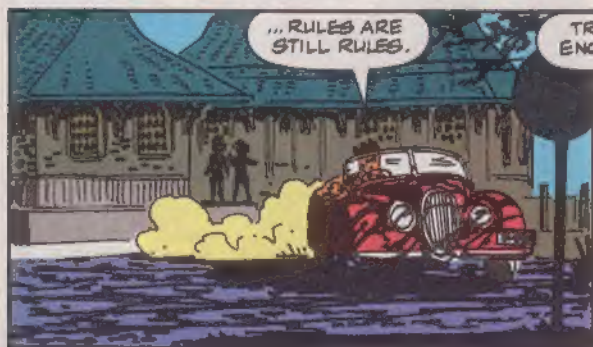
CAN I OFFER YOU BOTH A RIDE BACK TO SCHOOL?

ACTUALLY, SIR, WE'D PLANNED ON SHOWING PRYDE SOME LOCAL SIGHTS.



SUIT YOURSELF, HUNTSMAN! JUST BE SURE TO BE BACK BY DINNER.

EVEN THOUGH THE HEADMISTRESS IS AWAY AND THE SCHOOL'S ON ITS LAST LEGS...



...RULES ARE STILL RULES.

TRUE ENOUGH.

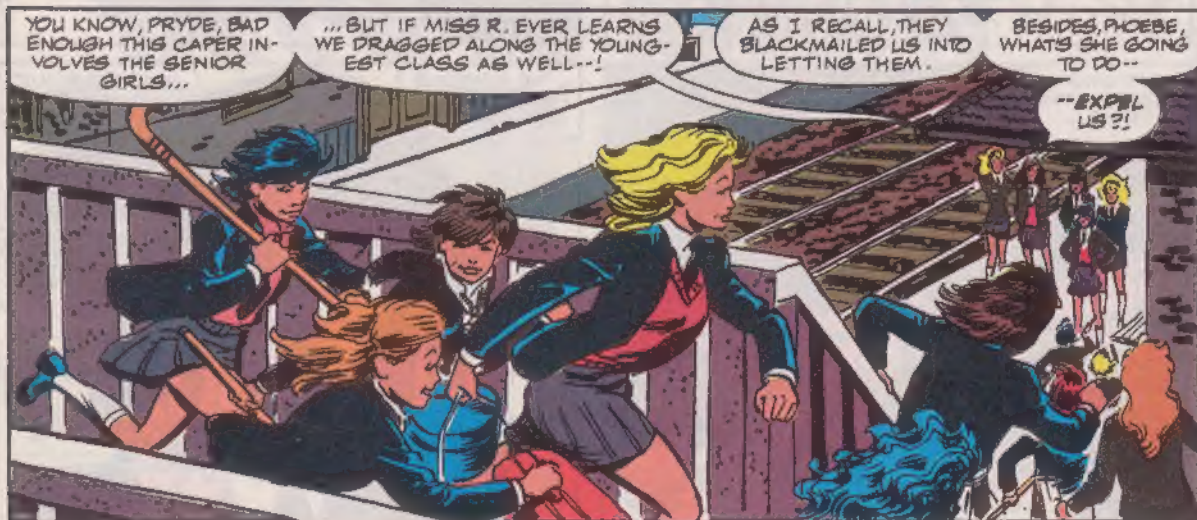


BUT SOMETIMES, THEY'RE MADE TO BE BROKEN.

ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE--

Phweert!

--GET YOURSELVES DOWN HERE, ON THE DOUBLE!



YOU KNOW, PRYDE, BAD ENOUGH THIS CAPER INVOLVES THE SENIOR GIRLS...

...BUT IF MISS R. EVER LEARNS WE DRAGGED ALONG THE YOUNGEST CLASS AS WELL--!

AS I RECALL, THEY BLACKMAILED US INTO LETTING THEM.

BESIDES, PHOEBE, WHAT'S SHE GOING TO DO--

--EXPL US?!





FINK-MINOR-- --CELLULAR! HERE YOU GO, KITTY!

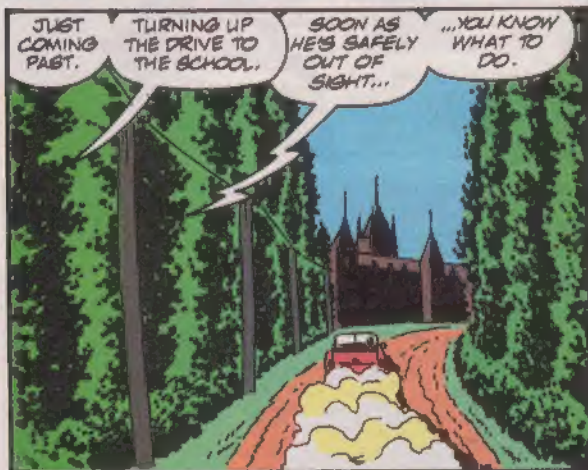


SO WEIRD, THE WAY YOU REFER TO KIDS BY THEIR LAST NAME.

NOT TO MENTION CALLING OLDER SISTERS "MAJOR" AND THE YOUNGER ONES "MINOR"

FINK-MAJOR, THIS IS PRYDE. YOU THERE, AMY?

ANY SIGN OF MR. REEVE?

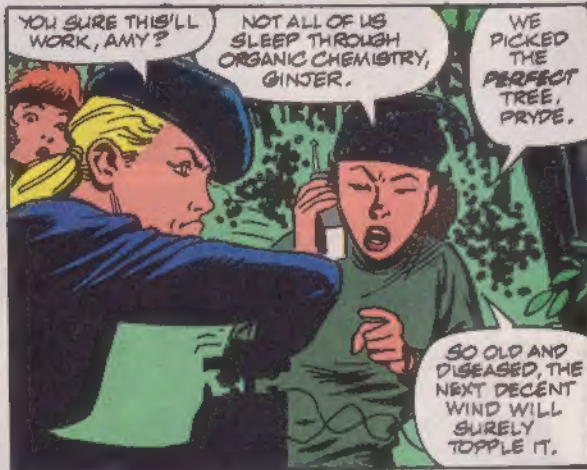


JUST COMING PAST.

TURNING UP THE DRIVE TO THE SCHOOL..

SOON AS HE'S SAFELY OUT OF SIGHT...

...YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.

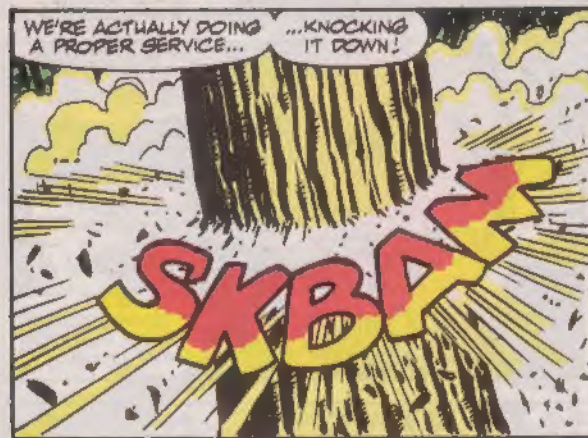


YOU SURE THIS'LL WORK, AMY?

NOT ALL OF US SLEEP THROUGH ORGANIC CHEMISTRY, GINGER.

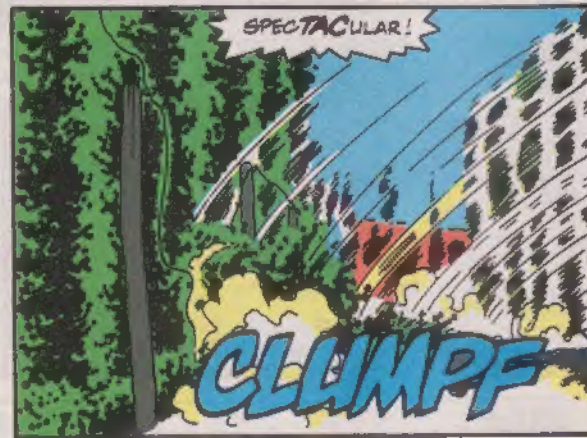
WE PICKED THE PERFECT TREE, PRYDE.

SO OLD AND DISEASED, THE NEXT DECENT WIND WILL SURELY TOPPLE IT.



WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING A PROPER SERVICE...

...KNOCKING IT DOWN!



SPECTACULAR!



NOT ONLY BLOCKED THE DRIVE...

...BUT CUT THE TELEPHONE LINES AS WELL.

TILL THIS MESS IS CLEANED UP..



...THE SCHOOL'S PRETTY MUCH CUT OFF!

WELL DONE, KID COMMANDOS!

RETURN TO BASE-- KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED--

--AND LEAVE THE REST TO US!





SO WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN, EH?

GOT BUSINESS, 'ERE, 'AVE YUS, YOU YOUNG'UNS?

FIELD TRIP, STATION-MASTER.



WE HAVE WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM MISS RUTHERFORD...

...PLUS TICKETS AND RESERVATIONS ON THE PADDINGTON EXPRESS.



WELL... EVERYTHING 'FEARS TO BE IN ORDER-- BUT I'VE GOT MY EYE ON YOU LOT, MAKE NO MISTAKE.

CLOCK'S RUNNING, PRYDE.

I KNOW, I KNOW, DON'T BUG ME-- QUIET, IT'S RINGING!

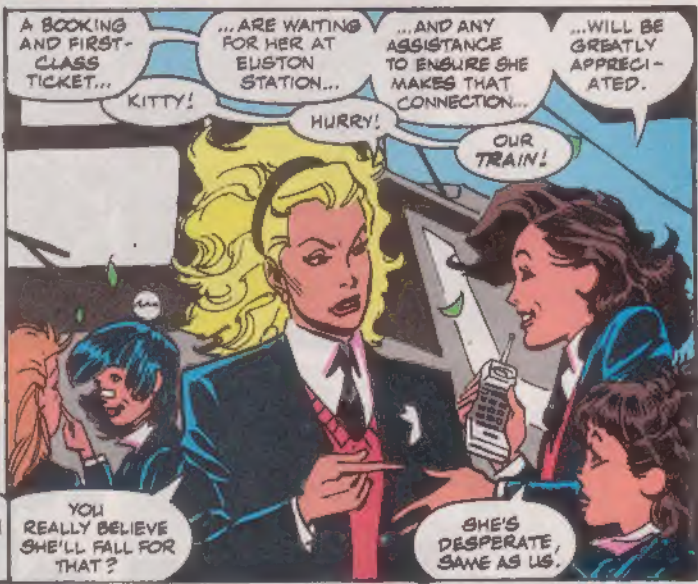


BRITISH RAIL, PADDINGTON, PASSENGER SERVICES?

I'M RINGING WITH AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR MISS AMELIA RUTHERFORD, ARRIVING ON YOUR ONE-TWENTY INTER-CITY SERVICE.

PLEASE INFORM HER THAT MISS ROSS OF FRASER'S BANK HAS BEEN UNEXPECTEDLY CALLED TO SCOTLAND...

...BUT WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO MEET WITH HER THERE.



A BOOKING AND FIRST-CLASS TICKET...

KITTY!

...ARE WAITING FOR HER AT EUSTON STATION...

HURRY!

...AND ANY ASSISTANCE TO ENSURE SHE MAKES THAT CONNECTION...

OUR TRAIN!

...WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

SHE'S DESPERATE, SAME AS US.



IT'S A NASTY TRICK.

COMES NATURALLY, AROUND YOU LOT.

BUT SERIOUSLY-- WE HAVE TO KEEP HER OUT OF THE WAY.



WE CAN'T HAVE HER DISCOVERING WHAT WE'RE DOING, AND MAYBE STOPPING US.

WE'VE HAD BARELY A FORTNIGHT TO PREPARE. THOSE OTHER TEAMS, THEY'VE PROBABLY HAD AGES.

LONG ODDS, PRYDE.



I'M A CUBS FAN, REMEMBER? WE THRIVE ON LONGSHOTS.

I'VE DONE SOME READING, PRYDE.

YOUR PRECIOUS CUBS, THEY ALWAYS LOSE.

I DON'T!



SAME  
MORNING...

...SALISBURY  
PLAIN...

...FAMED THE WORLD OVER AS THE  
LOCALE OF STONEHENGE (NOT TO  
MENTION AS A SETTING FOR THE  
BEATLES'—ANYBODY REMEMBER  
THEM—SECOND FILM, "HELP.")

BUT ALSO WELL KNOWN (IN  
CERTAIN CIRCLES, THAT IS)...

...AS THE PRIMARY TESTING  
AND MANEUVER GROUND FOR  
BRITISH MILITARY ARMOR.

ALL IS IN  
READINESS,  
MESMERO.

MANY THANKS,  
PROFESSOR  
STUART.

BY ALL  
MEANS,  
THEN...

...LET THE  
FUN BEGIN!

PRETTY  
FORMIDABLE  
OPPOSITION,  
EXCALIBUR.

THE  
MODS\*  
LATEST  
TOYS...

...STATE-OF-THE-ART  
EXPERIMENTAL  
ROBOT COMBAT  
UNITS.

\*MINISTRY OF  
DEFENSE. --T.K.

GO GET 'EM,  
HEROES!  
TRASH  
THE LOT!

AT WHICH POINT, ON CUE...

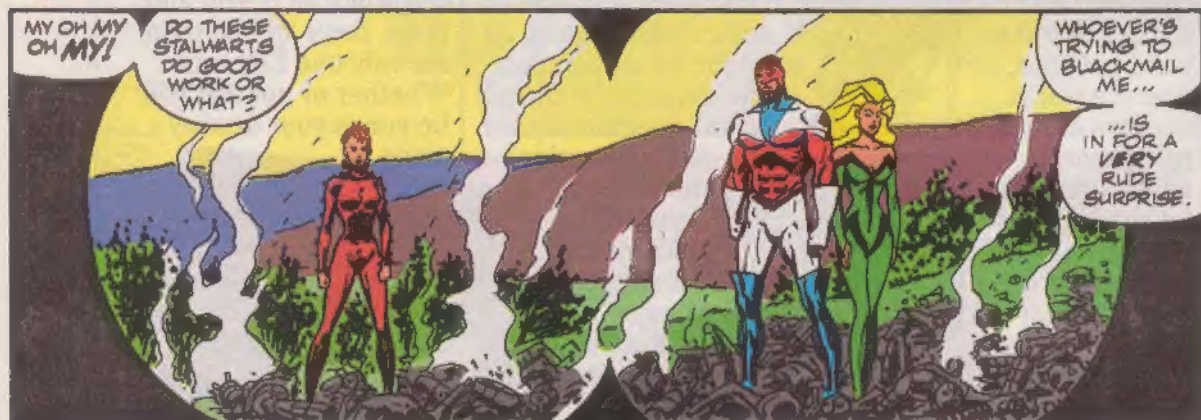
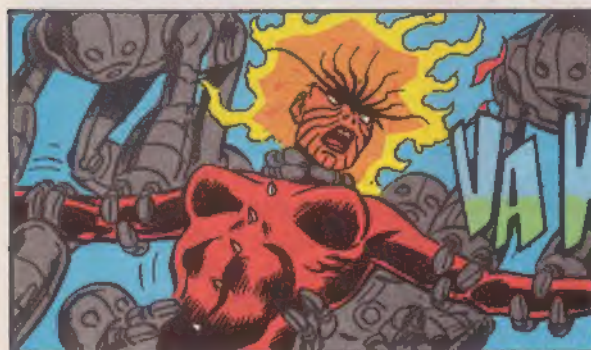
...PHOENIX...

...MEGGAN...

...AND CAPTAIN BRITAIN...

...SET OUT TO  
DO PRECISELY  
THAT!









I ONLY HYPNOTIZED YOU AND EXCALIBUR BECAUSE MY LIFE IS AT STAKE.

I MEAN, EVEN I HAVE A RIGHT TO SELF-PRESERVATION.

HOLD THAT THOUGHT, CHUM.

AND DON'T MOVE A MUSCLE.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!



BRIGADIER ALEXANDER STUART, AS I LIVE AND BREATHE!

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE!



BUT YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO TAKE ME INTO CUSTODY NOW, DO YOU?

I THOUGHT NOT.

WHAT YOU WANT, MORE THAN ANYTHING, IS TO BE MY FRIEND, YES?



THE DEVIL YOU SAY!

YOUR CURSED POWER DOESN'T WORK ON ME, FIEND!



NIGHTCRAWLER--

--STOP HER!

AS YOU COMMAND, MEIN HERR!

MY APOLOGIES, BRIGADIER.

FOR YOUR RESISTANCE...



...IS ABOUT TO COST YOU DEARLY!

UNGLAUBLICH!

MY TELEPORT SHOULD HAVE KNOCKED HER FOR A LOOP.



YET SHE'S STILL STRUGGLING!



NOT ANY LONGER.



HOW CAN ONE STUART BE IMMUNE TO MY INFLUENCE...

...WHEN HER TWIN BROTHER ISN'T?

NO MATTER REALLY-- SO LONG AS EXCALIBUR REMAINS UNDER MY COMPLETE CONTROL.



MEANWHILE, FURTHER ALONG THE RAILWAY LINE TO LONDON...

STEP KICK KICK STEP KICK--

--NO!

GEEZ LOUÛEZ, GUYS, C'MON...

...YOU GOT THIS RIGHT AT YESTERDAY'S PRACTICE.

CUT US SOME SLACK, PRYDE. THAT WASN'T ON A MOVING TRAIN.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT, VERONIQUE, YOU LEAD-FOOTED COW...

...BLAME EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF!

WHO SAID THAT?!

ONE MORE PEEP OUT OF ANY OF YOUR BRATS, SHELBY, AND I SWEAR--!

NAUGHTY NAUGHTY, VERONIQUE, NO SWEARING, MISS RUTHERFORD WOULDN'T APPROVE!

THAT'S IT!

I'VE HAD ALL I'M GOING TO TAKE FROM YOU ROTTEN LITTLE PERISHERS!

FINK-MINOR, CONSIDER YOURSELF TOAST!

BACK OFF, VERONIQUE!

GOES FOR YOU TOO, KAREN!

I MEAN IT, THE PAIR OF YOU, BEHAVE!

VERONIQUE-- YOUR HAND!?

IT--IT WENT RIGHT THROUGH PRYDE'S BODY, LIKE SHE WAS A GHOST!

HOW CAN THAT BE--

--WHAT ARE YOU?!

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? A MUTANT.

I'M PART OF EXCALIBUR.

I GO BY THE CODE-NAME, SHADOWCAT.

WOW!

TOTALLY ABSOLUTE!

AND SHE COMES ACROSS AS SUCH A FLATLINE!

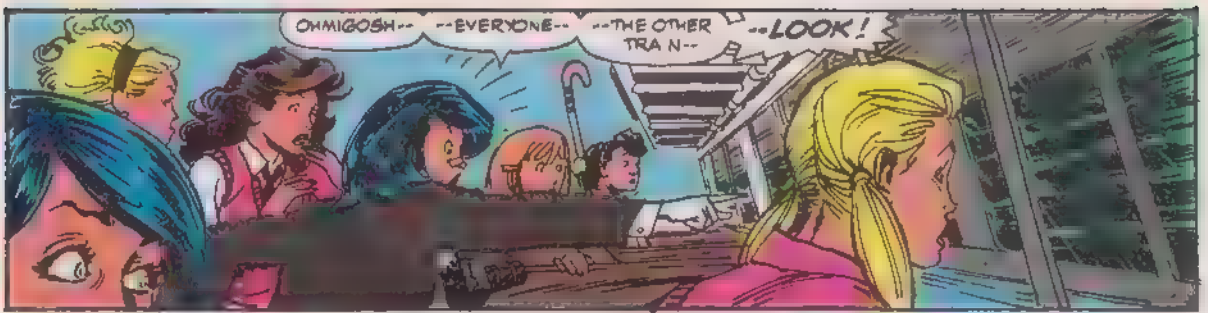
WHO'DA THOUGHT?

I WANT NIGHTCRAWLER, THE CUTIE!

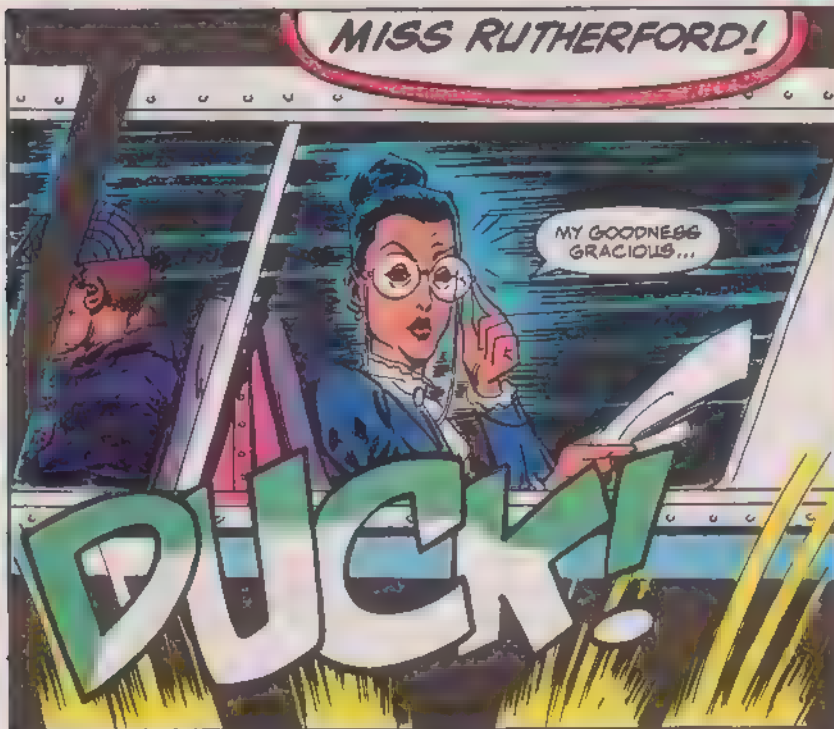
YOU GUYS DON'T MIND?

ARE YOU DAFT? THIS IS GREAT!





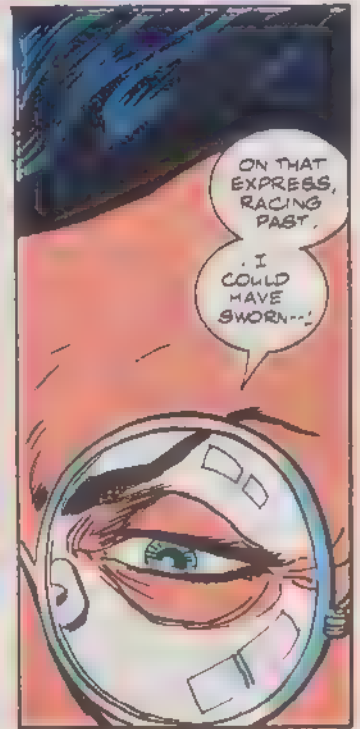
OHMIGOSH-- --EVERYONE-- --THE OTHER TRA N-- --LOOK!



MISS RUTHERFORD!

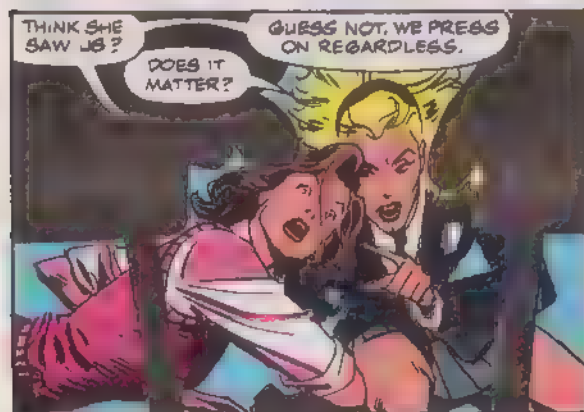
MY GOODNESS GRACIOUS...

DUCK!



ON THAT EXPRESS, RACING PAST.

I COULD HAVE SWORN--



THINK SHE SAW JB?

DOES IT MATTER?

GUESS NOT, WE PRESS ON REGARDLESS.



BUT I REALLY HATE IT WHEN A PLAN STARTS TO GLITCH

YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD US YOU KNOW--

--YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME--

--ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE



I S'POSE BUT THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED A SECRET IDENTITY PHOBBE. AND I CONFESS...

...AFTER A WHILE, YOU BE USED TO HEARING THE AUTOMATIC LIES

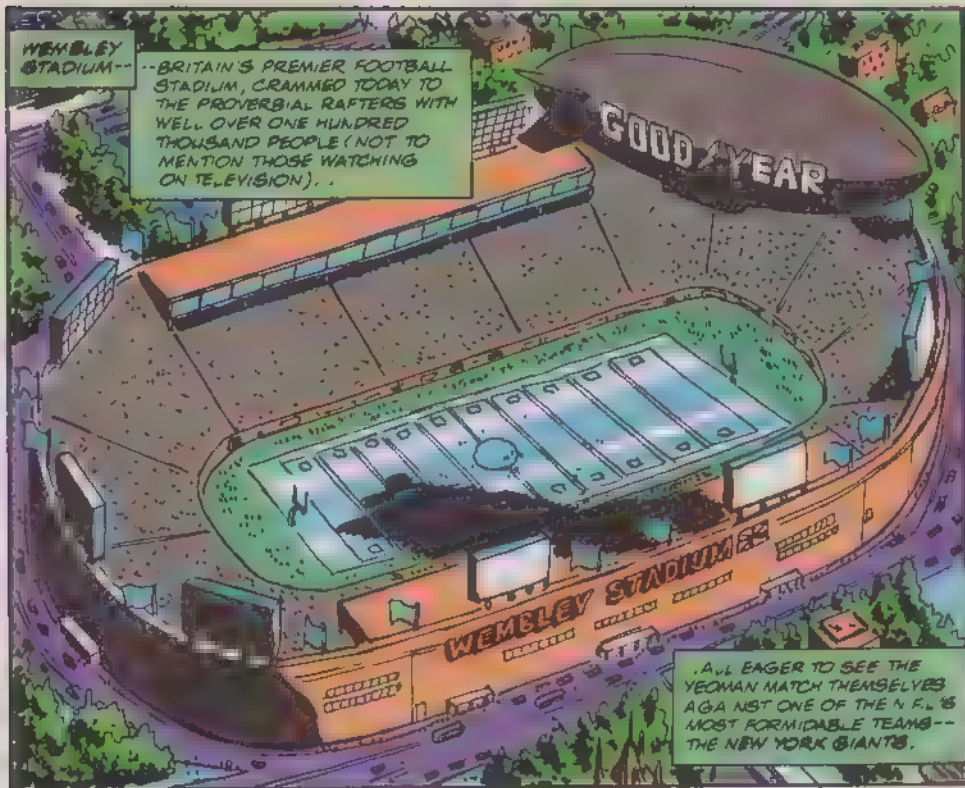
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I'M SORRY

N POINT OF FACT, PRYDE, IT'S WORTH QU TE A LOT

BUT IF FRIENDSH P ~~SEAS~~ ANYTHING...

...DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN..





WEMBLEY STADIUM--

...BRITAIN'S PREMIER FOOTBALL STADIUM, CRAMMED TODAY TO THE PROVERBIAL RAFTERS WITH WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE (NOT TO MENTION THOSE WATCHING ON TELEVISION).

NOT TO MENTION THE CHEERLEADING COMPETITION SET FOR HALF TIME.

THEY'RE ALL SO HUGE?  
IS THAT BODY ARMOR THEY WEAR?  
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU CALL IT, THIS ISN'T PROPER FOOTBALL!

HEY, GIMME A BREAK!  
I DIDN'T INVENT THE FLAMIN' GAME AND I DON'T PLAY IT, OKAY?!

...ALL EAGER TO SEE THE YEOMAN MATCH THEMSELVES AGAINST ONE OF THE N.F.L.'S MOST FORMIDABLE TEAMS-- THE NEW YORK GIANTS.



TOUCHY TOUCHY, PRYDE!

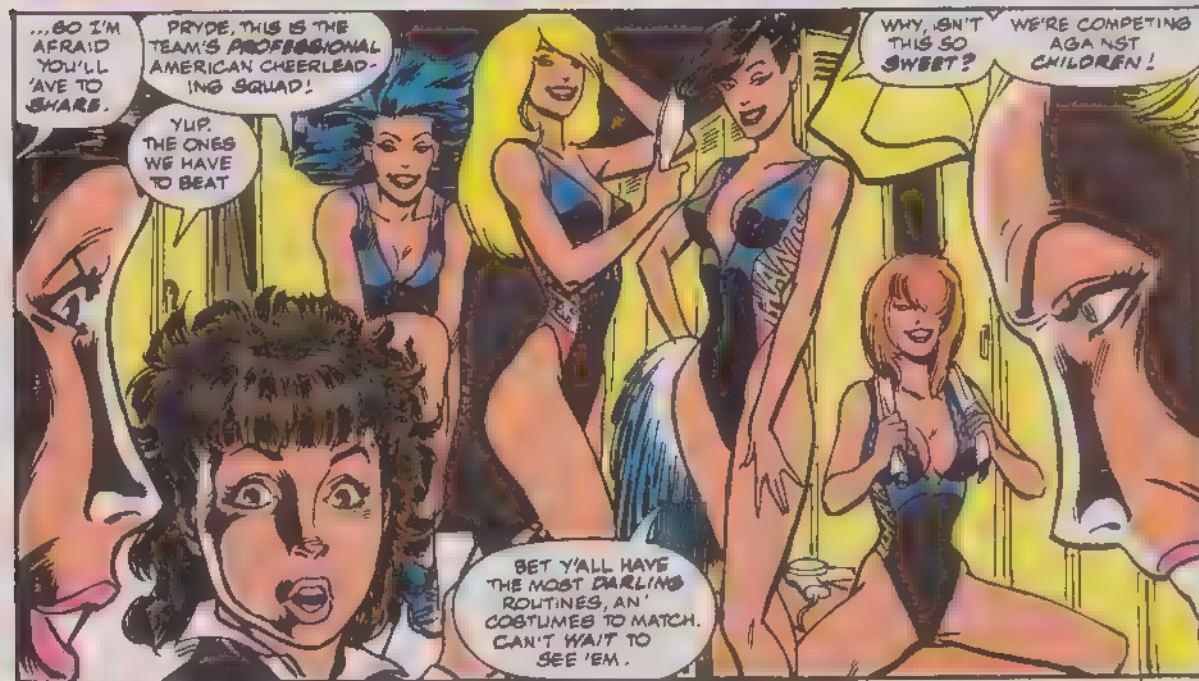
THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR AN ATTACK OF NERVES.

BESIDES, I THOUGHT YOU SUPER-FOLK WERE ABOVE ALL THAT.

WHAT CAN I SAY, FEEBS, I'M ONLY HUMAN.

'ERE YOU GO, LADIES.

WE'VE MORE CONTESTANTS THAN SPACE..



...SO I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO SHARE.

PRYDE, THIS IS THE TEAM'S PROFESSIONAL AMERICAN CHEERLEADING SQUAD!

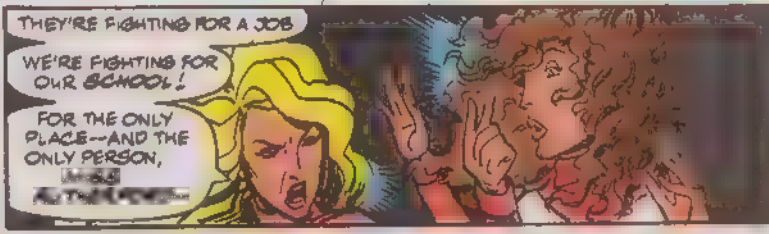
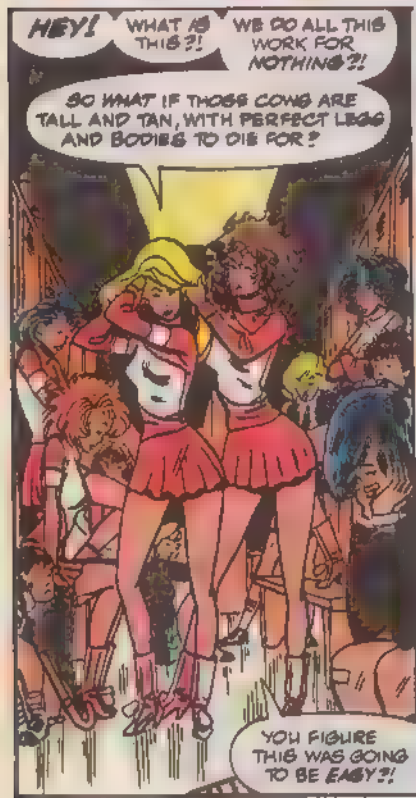
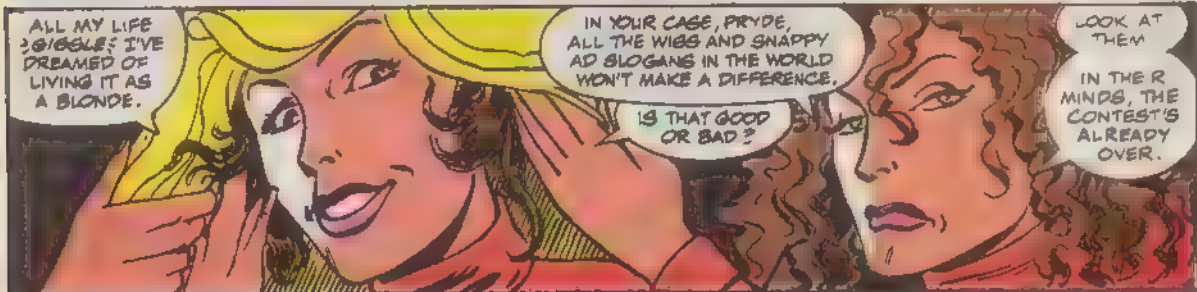
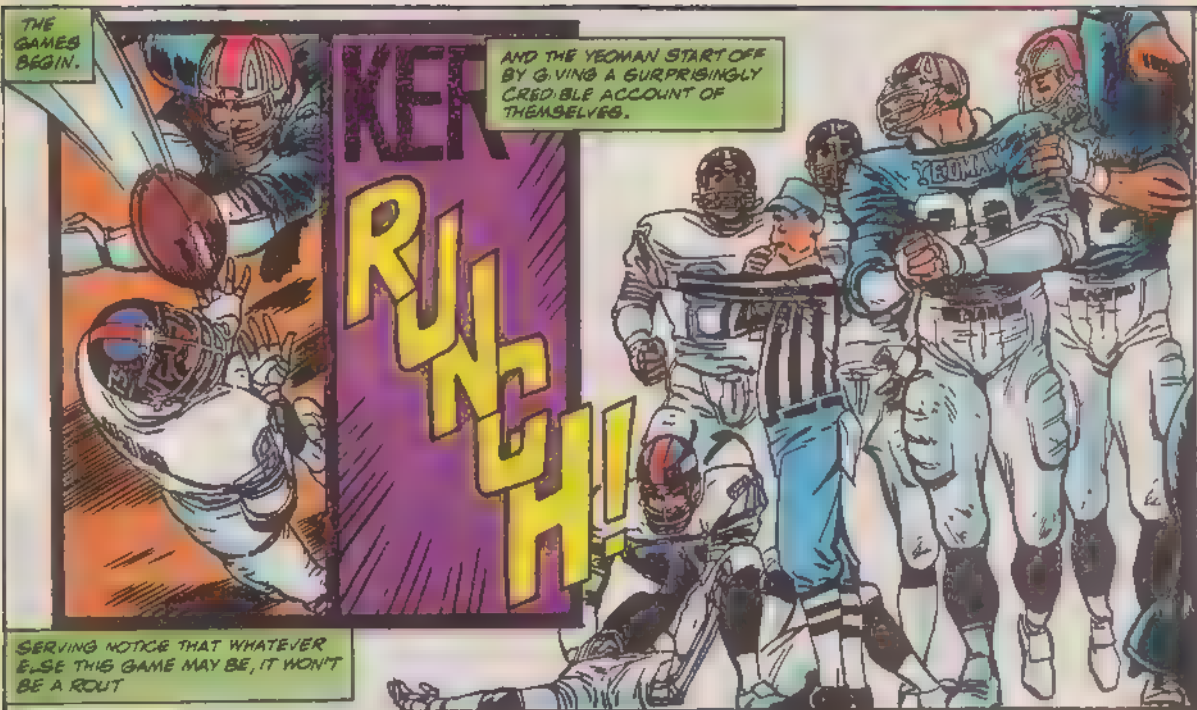
YUP, THE ONES WE HAVE TO BEAT

WHY, ISN'T THIS SO SWEET?

WE'RE COMPETING AGAINST CHILDREN!

BET Y'ALL HAVE THE MOST DARLING ROUTINES, AN' COSTUMES TO MATCH. CAN'T WAIT TO SEE 'EM.







MEANWHILE, BENEATH  
ANOTHER SECTION OF  
THE GRANDSTAND..

PEEK-A-BOO,  
WHERE ARE  
YOU?

IT'S NOT  
NICE TO KEEP  
A GUEST  
WAITING.

HALT!

WE ARE REQUIRED  
BY OUR OPERATORS  
TO WARN YOU,  
MESMERO...

...THAT THE SLIGHTEST  
ATTEMPT TO USE YOUR  
POWER OF ULTRA-HYP-  
NOSIS WILL RESULT  
IN YOUR IMMEDIATE  
TERMINATION

AND I  
THOUGHT  
WE WERE  
FALS!

LIKE I TOLD YOU  
HARDBOIDS, I DON'T  
WANT ANY TROUBLE.

I JUST WANT  
TO MEET YOUR  
"OPERATORS!"

HERE WE  
ARE,  
MUTANT.

"FENRIS" WILL SUFFICE.  
MORE THAN THAT, YOU  
NEED NOT KNOW.

GOT A  
NAME, BUNKY,  
TO GO WITH  
THE FLASHY  
SUITS?

PROBABLY QUITE TRUE. IF I  
HAD ANY EXPERIENCE PLAYING  
THE FLUNKY.

WHICH I  
DON'T

IF I  
WAS EVEN  
MESMERO

NO PROB.  
SIMPLY WANT  
TO GET OUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
STRAIGHT.

EASILY  
ACCOMPLISHED.

WE COMMAND, YOU  
OBEY YOU SHOULD HAVE NO  
TROUBLE ACCEPTING SUCH  
AN ARRANGEMENT, MESMERO,  
CONSIDERING YOUR AMPLE  
EXPERIENCE AS A  
FLUNKY.

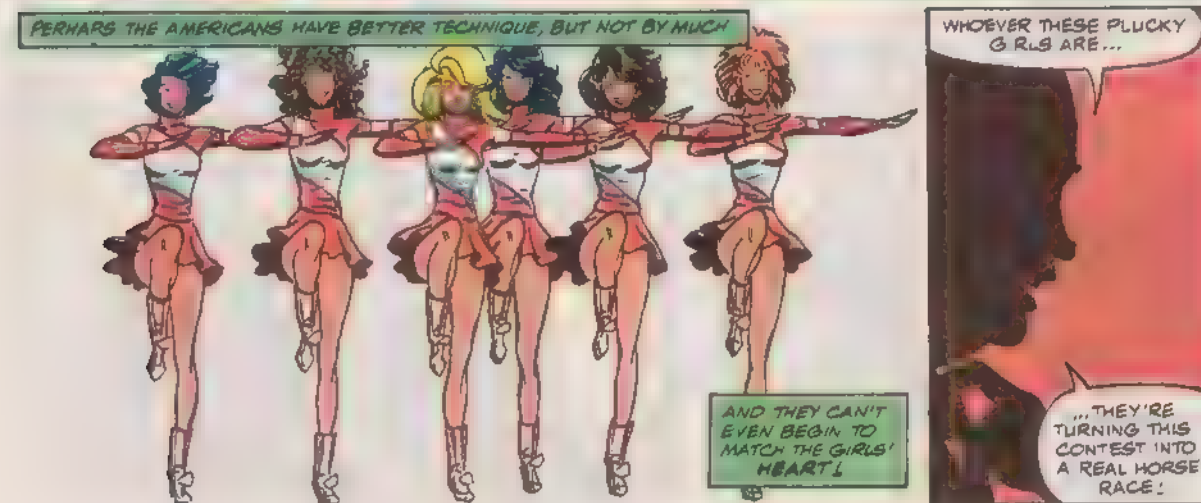
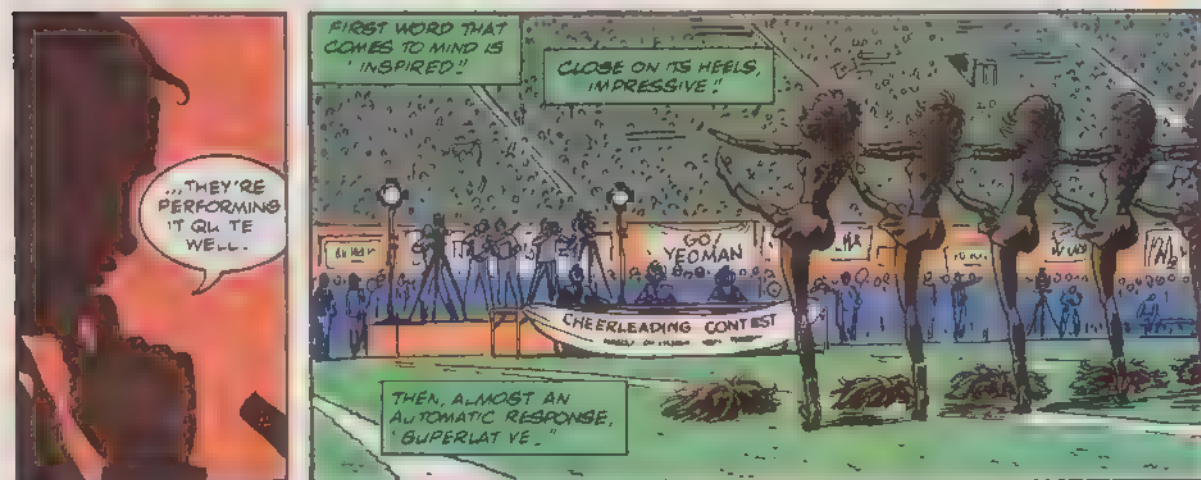
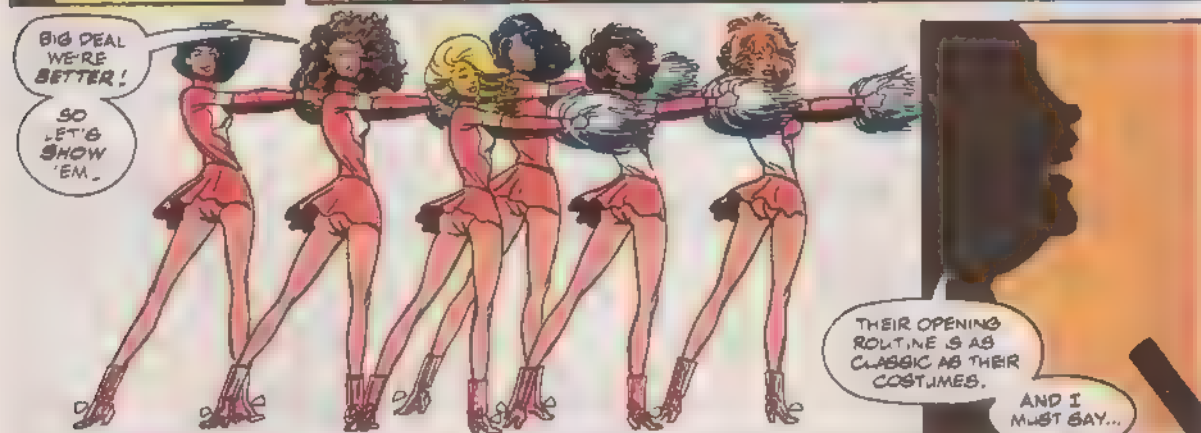
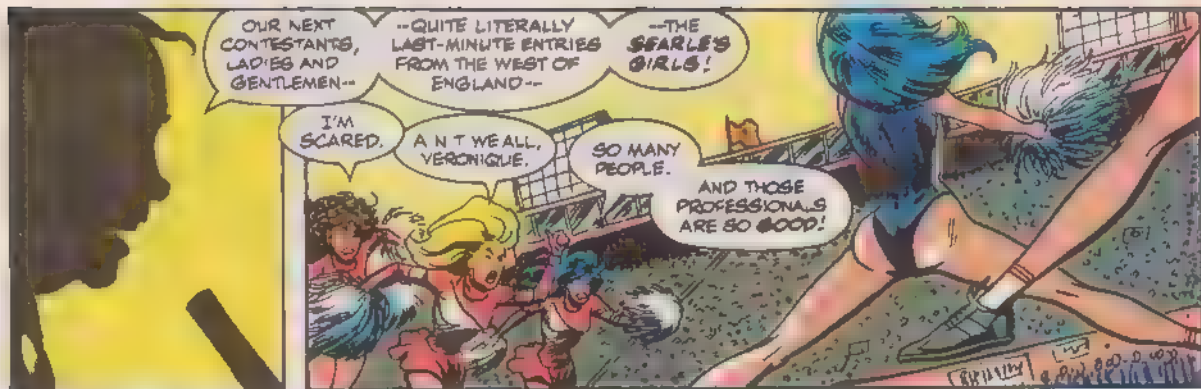
WHICH I MOST  
EMPHATICALLY AM  
NOT!

WERE YOU SILLY  
ENOUGH TO BELIEVE  
MASTER MESMERO  
WOULD ACTUALLY  
PLACE HIMSELF  
AT RISK?

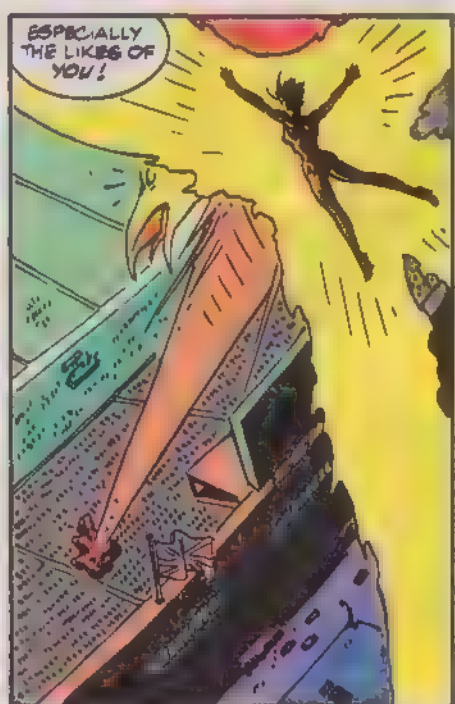
PERISH  
THE THOUGHT,  
THAT'S MY  
JOB

AND THUMPING YOUR  
SWINISH HEADS, FENRIS,  
MY PLEASURE!

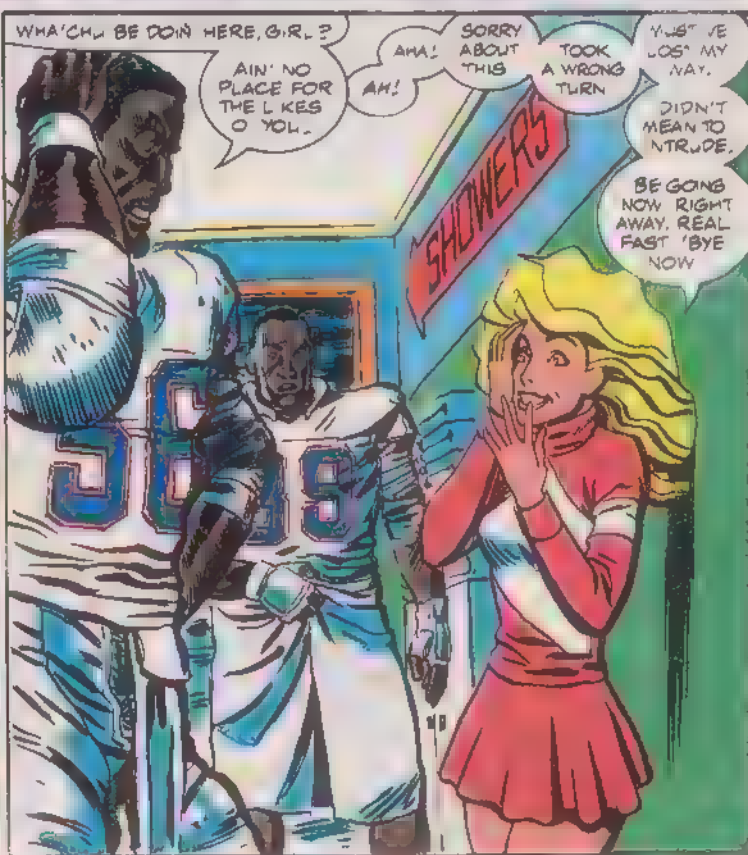
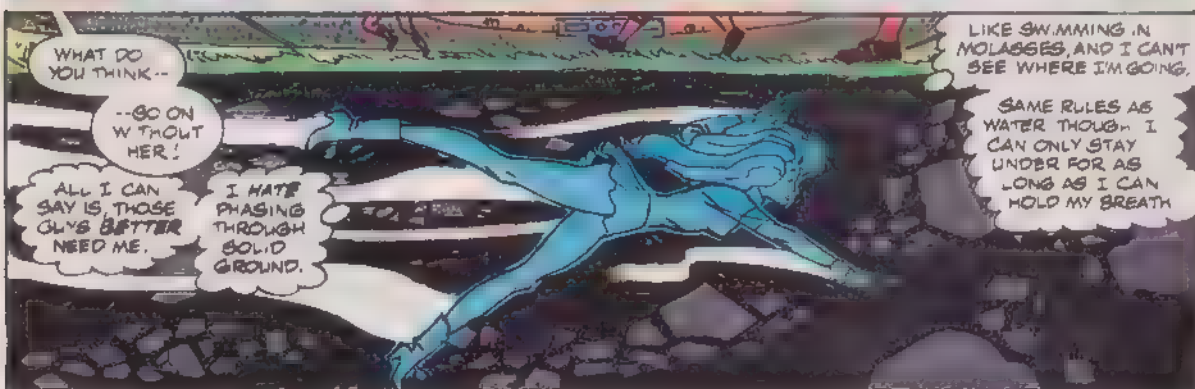




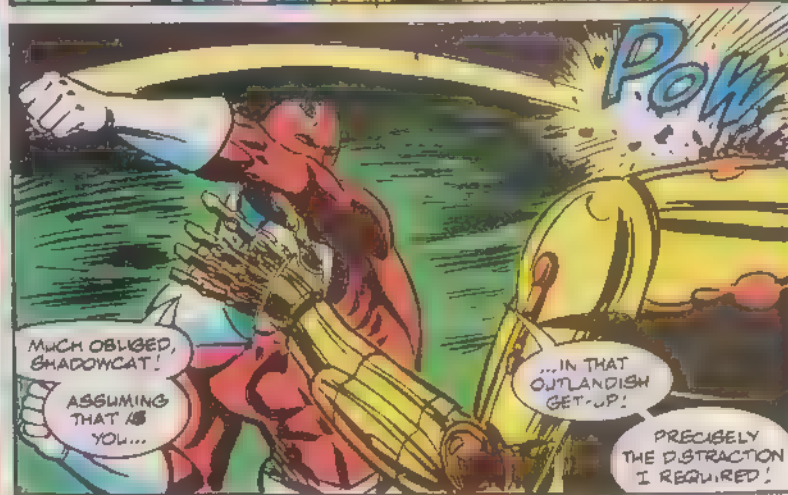
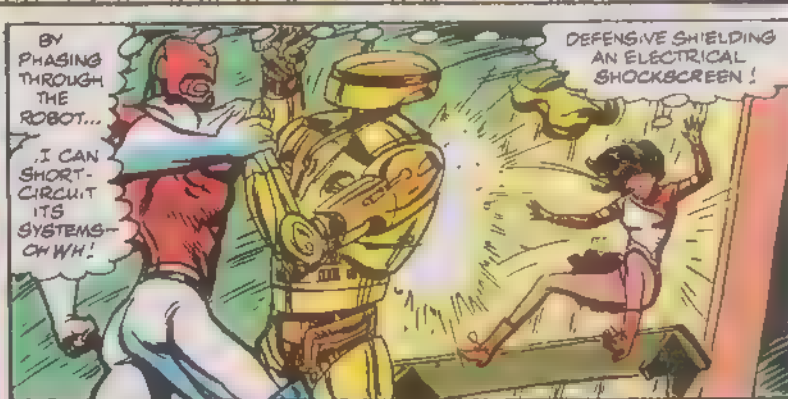
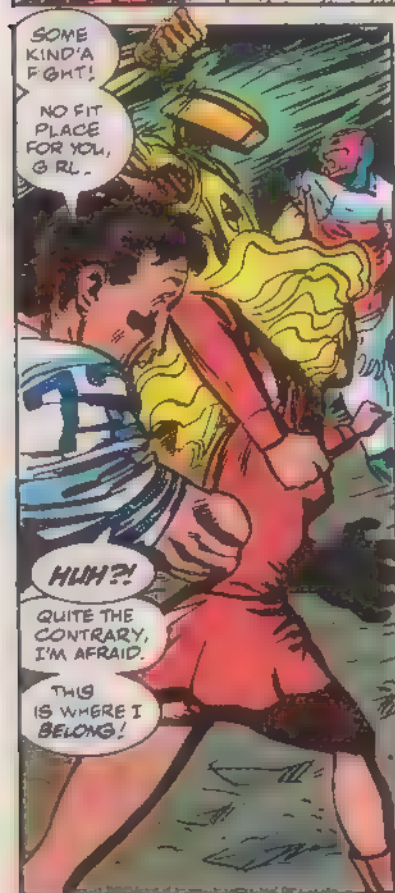




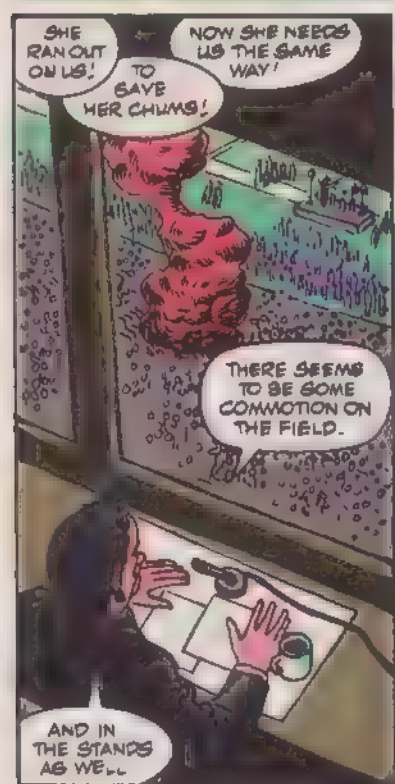
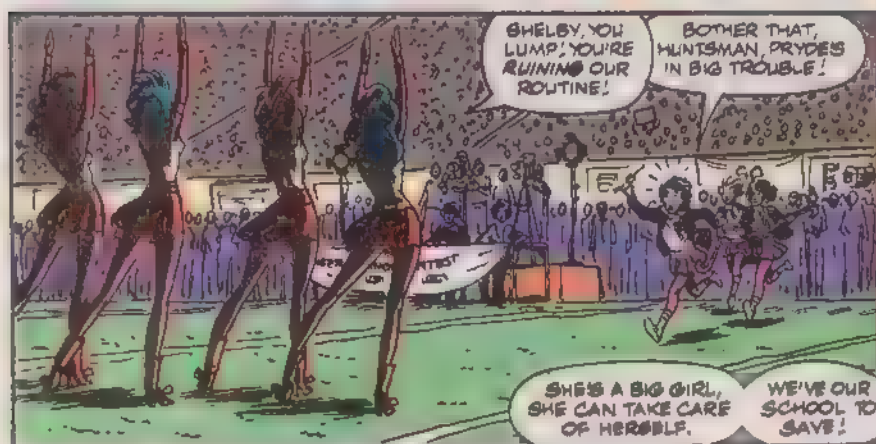
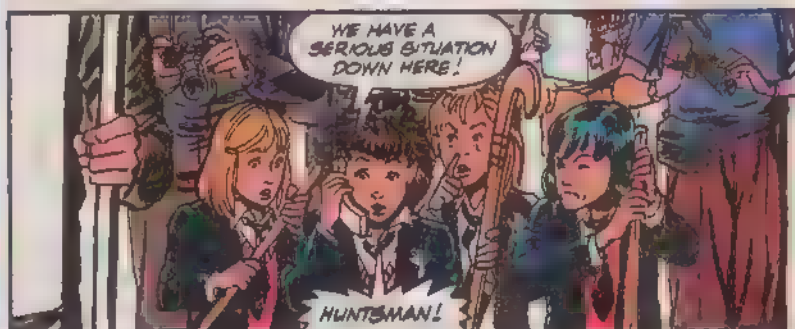
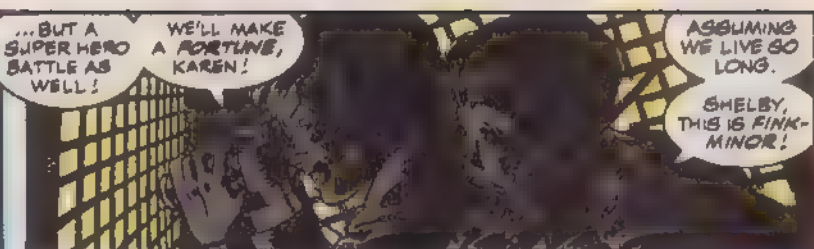
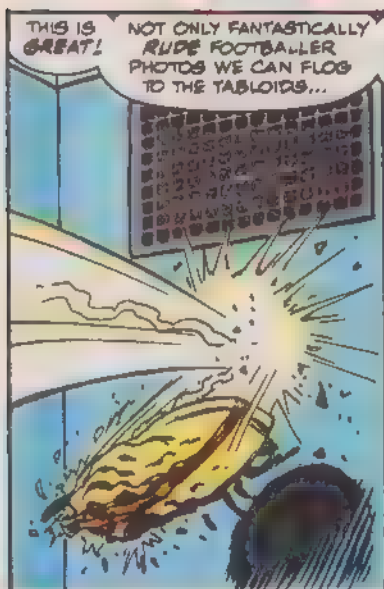














## STAN'S SOAPBOX

Hi, Heroes! Even though Christmas is behind us, big-hearted Marvel still has plenty of goodies in store for you! And here's where your old faithful Soapbox Santa clues you in to two new titles going on sale right now!

You've seen the ads! You've heard the name uttered in whispers! But now it's time to meet the newest, most exotically exciting superstar in the mighty Marvel firmament—the only super hero based on a real-life, flesh-and-blood human being—dazzling, dangerous, deadly—a smoldering, sizzling stick of human dynamite—the one and only NIGHT CAT!

Of course, the cat's manager, Dapper Don Kessler, and I have a somewhat selfish motive for pushing Night Cat's first issue since sneaky artist Denys Cowan actually drew us in as part of the story. Yours truly wrote the script, too, which could possibly change the complexion of the comic book industry for all time to

come! But don't let that discourage you—you can always just look at the pictures!

But hey, that's only half the excitement! Our whole blushin' Bullpen is turned on to



Troma Films' wild and wacky world-famous movie idol, TOXIC AVENGER, the super hero who makes Spider-Man seem like a well-adjusted average guy! In fact, we dig it so much that we made a deal with Lovable Lloyd Kaufman and the Magnanimous Michael Herz, The big-time movie producers who so unselfishly unleashed 'ol Toxie on a defenseless public, a deal to publish his sensationally screwy adventures in our maniacal style!

Be forewarned! Toxie is not your usual hero! In fact, he's not your usual anything. But this you can count on—NIGHT CAT and THE TOXIC AVENGER may turn out to be the most unexpected hits of '91, and, thanks to my legendary generosity, you're the first to hear of them!

Now, till next ish, wherever you go, whatever you do, think Marvell (instead of cluttering your mind with non-essentials!) Excelsior!

Stan

**I**t was a rainy day in New York. The kind of day when you could get wet just by walking outside. The man on the corner was selling umbrellas for five dollars each. I could usually talk him down to three. When I got home, I would throw it on the pile with the 300 other umbrellas I've managed to leave at home every time it rains. It seems to rain a lot in New York. Perhaps it's God's way of trying to give the city an acid bath. Perhaps not. That's not for me to say. Me, I'm just another private eye. They call me *Dodge Deadline*. Comic Book Detective.

It was a slow day at the office: I was just about to seriously consider calling up that guy on TV who makes the pitch for Apex Technical School. Then he walked in — Tom DeFalco, head honcho over at Marvel Comics. He had a problem, and he needed my help. Last month's Bullpen Bulletins Page had disappeared before it had ever seen print. He wanted me to find it. I took the case. Tom took the six-pack.

I headed uptown to the offices of Marvel Comics. If I was going to learn anything about the missing Bullpen Page, this was the place to do it. My first stop was the office of PUNISHER editor Don Daley.

Don told me he was exhausted — he was still resting up from the New York Runners Club's Midnight Run. That's a run that's held every year, beginning at exactly twelve midnight on New Year's Day. Don also entered the New York Marathon last year for the first time. It seemed like he'd been doing a lot of running lately. Just what exactly was he running from, anyway? I listed Don as a suspect, and moved on.

I stopped by Ralph Macchio's office, and found Ralph's assistant, Mike Heisler, still missing after a mysterious three-month absence. Heisler allegedly is taking some time off to do some freelance lettering, something about owing a debt to his uncle. Funny, I didn't know Heisler's uncle was named "Sam". Another potential suspect.

I stopped in to see Jim Salicrup, but he was so deliriously happy, he couldn't even

talk to me, *Dodge Deadline*. It seemed one of Jim's freelancers, Fred Hembeck, recently had a baby with his lovely wife Lynn. The child was born on August 25th, and named Julie Elizabeth Moss Hembeck. That's a lot of names for a little kid. In his present state, there was no talking to Salicrup, so I made a mental note to track him down later.

I noticed my mental pen was getting low on mental ink, so I made another mental note to stop by a mental store later and pick up some more.

I headed over to see Craig Anderson, Marvel's resident idiot. Craig gave me the lowdown on the new Silver Surfer home video game from Nintendo, and the Spider-Man home game from Sega-Genesis. Craig added that the Spider-Man hand-held game from Gameboy is also a big hit. Craig talked about a potential Spider-Man arcade game, but he seemed to be dodging the real issue. Did Craig know something about the missing Bullpen Page — something he wasn't telling me, *Dodge Deadline*?

Craig threw me a few names — Jim Starlin, George Perez. I caught them. He said they were working on a project which just might blow the lid off this whole case. But Starlin and Perez were nowhere to be found. Apparently they'd gone into hiding to work on this hush-hush project. All I found about this mystery project was that it involved a dangerous customer by the name of Thanos... as well as almost everybody in the Marvel Universe. Clearly I was on to something big... but that wasn't the case I was working on. I'd have to come back to that some other day. I still hadn't found that Bullpen Page.

Assistant Editor Chris Cooper walked by me, *Dodge Deadline*, in the hall. I overheard him tell fellow assistant, Len Kaminsky he's never been mentioned in the Bullpen Page before. Len said that made two of them. Hmm — that gives them both motives, but very flimsy ones.

I started encroaching around Bob Budiansky's office. But Bob wasn't talking. Neither was his assistant Tom Brevoort.

All I could get out of them was that they're doing a newsstand reprint of the four-issue DEATHLOCK Limited Series, and working on the 1991 Marvel trading cards.

That was all well and good, but it didn't solve my case. I paid a visit to Epic Editor Marcus McLaurin, who was happy as a clam about the fourth anniversary of the Comic Illustrators Guild at the Pratt School of Art and Design. It seems Marcus formed the club while in his senior year at the school, to pave the way for future generations of artists to get away with drawing comics in class.

He's one sharp cucumber, that Marcus, but no Bullpen Page-napper. Next I noticed his assistant, Marie Javins. Marie's wall is decorated with drawings of cows by some of the biggest names in comics. But Marie threatened to take down her Wall of Bountiful Bovines if she received no new submissions soon. Would Marie's wall come tumbling down? Unfortunately, I couldn't stick around to find out.

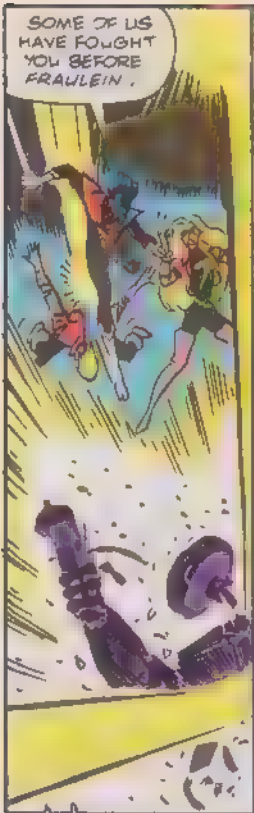
I could've pumped people at Marvel for answers all day, but I was cruising in the fast lane to nowhere. Everyone was a potential suspect. I decided I would switch tactics.

I charmed my way into Marvel's master computer file. If there was any trace left of the Bullpen Page, I knew I would find it here. I punched up the file, and there it was — the December Bullpen Page. It was just full of all kinds of incriminating evidence about the Marvel staff. If this thing ever saw print, it would destroy several careers, a couple marriages, and the noon trade at Slappy Sam's Eat 'n' Run. No wonder someone tried to suppress it. This thing was hotter than a jalapeno pepper in a sauna.

I decided to take the disc to DeFalco. If anyone knew I had this disc, I could start etching my own epitaph. Just then, I felt the cold steel of the barrel of a .45 press against the back of my neck...

IS THIS THE END OF DODGE DEADLINE? YOU WISH

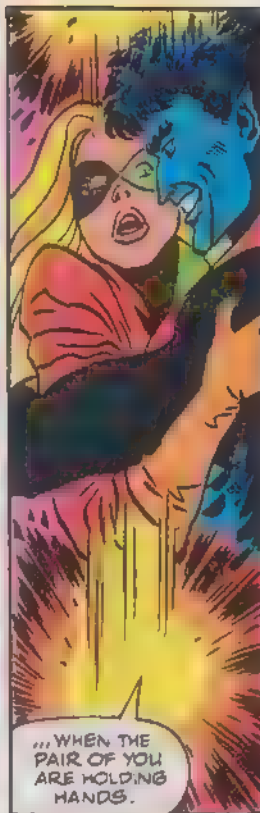




SOME OF US  
HAVE FOUGHT  
YOU BEFORE  
FRAULEIN.



...AND ARE THEREFORE  
AWARE THAT YOUR OWN  
MUTANT ENERGY POWERS  
ONLY WORK...



...WHEN THE  
PAIR OF YOU  
ARE HOLDING  
HANDS.



SEPARATE YOU BOTH,  
AND THAT THREAT IS  
ELIMINATED.

WHOA.

REMIND ME  
NEVER TO TRY  
THAT STUNT  
AGAIN.



WHAT'S  
THE MATTER  
RUNNING OUT  
OF...YES?

YOUR  
FR ENDS  
BE...EVE YOU'RE  
DEAD OR SOME-  
THING I BET  
THEY'LL BE GLAD  
TO SEE YOU

YOU'RE  
SHADOWCAT, YES?  
I HEARD CAPTAIN  
BRITAIN MENTION  
YOUR NAME  
PLEASED TO MEET  
YOU.

FOR MYSELF, I  
TRULY APPRECIATE  
YOUR LENDING A  
HAND. MAKES ME  
REGRET WHAT  
I HAVE TO DO  
NEXT.

YOU SEE,  
I CAN'T HAVE  
YOU RUNNING  
AROUND  
LOOSE.

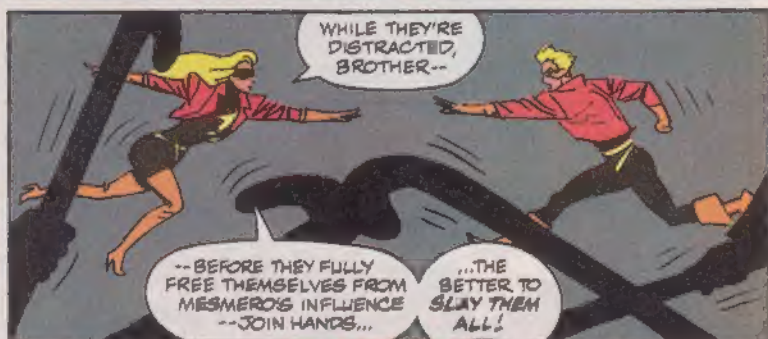


YOU'LL HAVE  
TO JOIN YOUR  
TEAMMATES  
UNDER MY  
HYPNOTIC  
THRALL.

NOT TO WORRY, THOUGH I  
PROMISE NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE,  
MUCH.

GRRRRR!







AND  
SO...

... AFTER THE VILLAINS HAVE BEEN HANDED OVER TO  
THE FAR MORE TENDER MERCIES OF SCOTLAND YARD,  
REPRESENTED BY C.I.D. COMMANDER DAI THOMAS...

OH, THAT'S  
RICH!

TOO FLIPPIN'  
MAGNIFICENT FOR  
WORDS!

## STADIUM MANAGERS OFFICE

LAUGH ANY  
HARDER, DAI,  
YOU'LL DO YOUR-  
SELF AN  
INJURY.

BE WELL  
WORTH IT,  
BRIGADIER.

IMAGINE--  
EXCALIBUR SAVED  
FROM THE CLUTCHES  
OF A SUPER-VILLAIN  
BY A GIRLS' SCHOOL  
PEP SQUAD!

MIND YOU, NOT ANY OLD SCHOOL, I'LL GRANT YOU THAT.  
I TOOK A PEEK AT THE SPECIAL BRANCH RECORDS, HAVE  
YOU ANY NOTION WHAT THIS SCHOOL'S DONE IN THE PAST?!

WITH THEM  
ABOUT, WHO NEEDS  
THE PERISHING  
S.A.S.?

CAPTAIN  
SIGH &  
BRITAIN!

IS THAT  
TAIL REALLY  
PREHENSILE?

REAL FUR!  
REAL FANGS!  
BE STILL MY  
HEART!

PROS  
WON. I FEEL  
LOUSY.

IF YOU GUYS HADN'T  
QUIT THE FIELD, TO  
COME AFTER ME,  
THAT MIGHT'VE  
BEEN YOU.

IF NOT FOR YOU, WE WOULDN'T HAVE  
GOTTEN THIS FAR IN THE FIRST  
PLACE.

BEST FUN  
I'VE EVER  
HAD!

BUCK UP,  
PRYDE, IF WE  
GOTTA GO...

GIRLS!

... BEST TO DO  
IT WITH A PROPER  
BANG!

OH,  
CRUMBS!







# SWORD STROKES

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP  
387 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10016

TERRY KAVANAGH  
EDITOR  
KELLY CORVESE  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Attention correspondents: If you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

Now here this, loyal Marveloids! With the dawn of a new decade, we've decided to revamp and update our policy on the awarding of those nifty No-Prizes you hear mention of in many a Marvel mag. Henceforth, No-Prizes will be awarded for one thing and one thing only—meritorious service to *Marvel* above and beyond the call of duty. What constitutes "meritorious service?" Lots of things could! Like sending a box of comics to the children's wing of a hospital. Or compiling a chronological cross-title index to a character's appearances. Or coming up with an explanation for a major discrepancy in continuity. Your imagination's the limit. So if you think spotting a misspelled word or a miscolored boot is worth a No-Prize, you're living in the wrong decade!

Dear EXCALIBUR,

You just don't give anybody a break, do you, Mr. Claremont? For years, you've battered and tormented the X-Men, putting them through such hellish terrors as the Dark Phoenix Saga, Days of Future Past, Inferno, and not-to-mention killing them, while breaking our hearts as we see our beloved characters being rendered limb from emotional limb by a demon called Claremont. And loving every minute of it.

Now, you have taken our favorite British "supers"—namely Excalibur—through a tedious, lengthy, tiresome, weary, exhausting, *really* long (but fun, in a torturous kind of way) Cross-Time Caper, only to finally bring our team home, and then have Galactus knocking on their front door! If I didn't know you so well, Mr. Claremont, I'd say you have a wicked mean streak in you!

Tim Ellsworth  
1721 30th St. N.W.  
Canton, OH 44709

Glad you're enjoying EXCALIBUR, Tim! (At least, we think you're enjoying it...)

Dear Sword Strokes,

I have every issue of EXCALIBUR and love the comic. The art work is great and the covers are even better, but I think you should go back to the pictures on the back—my personal favorite was Phoenix on the back of issue #1.

I just finished issue #24 and am glad that Excalibur is finally back where they belong. I have something I'd like to point out—the Cross Time Caper was only supposed to last nine issues but ran on for thirteen. I'm not complaining—I thought the story was done very well and just thought I'd point that out.

I also have a question. In all the dimensions there was one thing missing from the other Excalibur teams—Phoenix. Why?! I really like Phoenix and would like to know.

I am also very confused about Phoenix's life so I am trying to get a hold of all the X-MEN that she's in. So far I have most of the X-MEN comics from issue #199, where she takes on the powers of Phoenix. I think there should be an issue of EXCALIBUR that

gives her origin or at least what she remembers.

Nathan Little  
507 E. Oak Street  
Lafayette, CO 80026

Well, Nathan, as we know from later issues of EXCALIBUR, Phoenix is the living embodiment of one of the primal forces. It stands to reason that such a force is one of the creative causes for the existence of all realities, and therefore can only exist once across all dimensions. Or—maybe the others were just visiting out-of-town relatives that day!

Watch for a complete explanation of Phoenix in these very pages within the year.

Dear EXCALIBUR,

After reading issue #23 I have just one thing to say to you... How dare you kill Kitty?! Excalibur without Shadowcat is like X-Men without Wolverine, or like X-Factor without Cyclops and Jean, or... well, I guess you get the point.

And another thing—I also read a letter in *Sword Strokes* in which somebody said that Nightcrawler should be the leader of Excalibur, and I couldn't disagree more. I strongly feel that Rachel should be the leader. I mean, just look at her. She looks like such a leader figure for the team. And she's so powerful it's cool. So until you kill off all the good members of Excalibur, keep up the excellent work and make mine Marvel!

Tracy Schmick  
(Address Withheld by Request)

A Kitty did die—but only in an alternate dimension! Tracy, be assured that our Kitty still lives and will eventually be reunited with the rest of the team.

Kitty was the subject of much of our mail—seems there's some question about her age. In keeping with the new No-Prize policy announced above, we believe Kitty's age to be of some import.

Dear Fellow Members of the EXCALIBUR Team,

Guess what everyone, I think you made a slight boo-boo. In your EXCALIBUR #24, you celebrated Katherine's fifteenth birthday.

However, there is a slight discrepancy in the age of Katherine. In the UNCANNY X-MEN #196, you have Katherine saying that she's already fifteen years old. Page 15: "I am a mutant, do you think it's wise to cross me? And if I'm not—how do you think assaulting a fifteen year old girl is going to look on your records? Let's call this quits, guys before things get out of hand—ACKGH!"

Solution: Kitty was actually fourteen plus some months old when she appeared in X-MEN #196. When she was cornered, she, like any teenager, would like to consider themselves a bit older by rounding up his or her age. Plus, Katherine was trying to get herself out of a jam when she was in possible trouble.

So, what do ya' think... a No-Prize?!

John Tze-Chang Wu  
aka Briareos Hecatonchires  
(No address on letter)

John, your explanation makes perfect sense! A super special, limited edition, one-of-a-kind No-Prize would be speeding its way toward you at this very moment. If we had your address! Hey, everybody! Please be sure that your address appears on all letters you send to us. It will be cheerfully withheld upon request!

Dear Sirs,

Kitty Pryde is only 15 years old?! I initially thought her to be at least twenty-ish. Boy. You learn something new every day.

Well, we've arrived at the end of yet another storyline. I reckon it was a wise move. I was quite pleased with the outcome. It maintained my interest completely during the run (#14 was my favorite) but I think it's now time to move on. I'm sure you guys have a lot of other great yarns nipping at your gizzards. Can't wait to hear them.

I think Courtney's and Kitty's night on the town in issue #24 showed a lot about Kitty's personality. It seems she isn't cut out for that sort of life. But I think that could provide an interesting story or two. Kitty, being much younger than I previously surmised, has much to learn about herself and the world although she is very mature for her age. All teenagers need their parents whether they think they do or not. Courtney could be a good substitute. The two of them are different enough that it just might work. I don't suggest that Courtney be too motherly but she should be a good, older friend that can lend a guiding hand when Kitty needs it, whether or not she thinks she needs it.

I liked the super types they ran into. Bring them for a short visit to Earth. Centurion Britannus, Lady London, Chevalier Bretagne and Captain Cymru would make a good regular team for Excalibur to encounter.

Lastly, but definitely not leastly, we have Galactus! My oh my, we've got problems right here in River City! Last time I saw him, it took the entire FF, Thor and Iron Man to stop him and they're pretty heavy duty guys. Let's hope Excalibur comes out of it intact. Or did the recent events in FANTASTIC FOUR take place after what is going to happen to Excalibur?

Keep up the X-cellent work!

Christopher Dain Burton  
(No address on letter)

Let's remember, when it comes to Kitty's age and her appearance, Christopher, she is a mutant!

And finally, for all you Kitty Pryde/Shadowcat fans out there—good news! There's a new fanzine and fan club devoted especially to Shadowcat: *Soulmates*! You can write to the following addresses for more information:

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3401 Oxford Valley Rd., #G-3  
Levittown, PA 19057-3502

Robert J. Spassov, President  
7087 Dolphin St.  
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